

THE BEACON

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UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND

Sexuality club approved

University officers recognize Gay Straight Partnership

By Anna Walters
News Editor

The UP administration officially recognized the university's first-ever sexuality club, the Gay Straight Partnership, at a meeting last Monday, signaling the end of the administration's 14-year-long span of denying sexuality clubs on campus.

"I'm just excited it's a real club," said senior Bridget Domeier, a founding member. "We were trying to be hush hush, saying 'don't get too excited, don't get too excited,' but it was accepted."

The GSP's mission, according to the club's constitution, is "to build a community that is open and welcoming to all students" and "to help all students grow in friendship, knowledge, faith and service."

Apart from community building, the GSP also will strive to educate students on issues surrounding sexuality without advancing any kind of agenda, according to the club's mission, and to serve the extended community through volunteering and education.

After the GSP application was approved by the ASUP Club Recognition Advisory Committee, it was passed on to various administrators until it landed on the desk of John Goldrick, vice president for enrollment management and student life.

Most of the time, applications for club recognition, after ASUP makes a recommendation, are approved or denied by Jeromy Koffler, director of Student Activities. But proposed clubs that potentially conflict with the University's mission or Catholic character are reviewed by the officers — a group of administrators consisting of the president, the vice presidents and the provost — before approval may be granted.

Koffler said that the officers involvement in a club's acceptance or rejection is rare.

"Have we seen a case (where the



SARAH LAPONTE / THE BEACON

ASUP President David Gregg meets with Valerie Silliman and Rosie Cullen (left) of the GSP to discuss ASUP funding of the recently-approved club.

officers decide) in recent history? No. But we also haven't had a GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning) group proposed in recent history," Koffler said.

Goldrick, along with the other officers of the University and the Rev. John Donato, C.S.C., the associate vice president for student life, reviewed the GSP application at their meeting on Dec. 10. Goldrick then sent a memo to Koffler, to be shared with the GSP's founding members, outlining changes to be made to the GSP constitution before the officers would approve the club, including choosing new advisers, proposing amendments to the club constitution, and removing a section

on networking with other schools.

"We are all very supportive of your efforts, and, as you have requested, provide the following feedback about the proposal and our need to require a few changes and amendments to it prior to our final consideration of the group's request for official recognition," Goldrick wrote in the memo. Goldrick declined to comment on the club for The Beacon.

The GSP made the proposed changes to its constitution and its application was reviewed and unanimously approved by the officers at their meeting on Monday.

See Partnership, page 4

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PARTNERSHIP: Club receives some ASUP funds

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"I'm delighted and honored that this group of students got to be involved in a process and it went this way and got recognized," said senior Valerie Silliman, GSP president and co-founder. "There have been students in the past that have tried in a variety of ways and I really recognize that their work has prepped us for this time."

In the past, the administration has denied proposed sexuality clubs. Two groups, Up'N'Out and Friends United to Educate Lives (FUEL), applied for club recognition in the 1990s but were both rejected by the administration because the clubs conflicted with the University's Catholic views on homosexuality.

The first change the officers recommended was that the club's existing advisers, social work professor Anissa Rogers and Kristina Houck, the Health Center's substance abuse prevention coordinator, be replaced by "two people who are specially charged with the articulation of our mission," Goldrick wrote. Donato and Stacey Noem, Campus Ministry's assistant director of faith formation, were chosen by the officers as the GSP's new advisers.

According to the memo, the officers' decision to recommend an administrator for the role of a GSP adviser is "an indication of the importance that (they) attach to (a club's) 'fit' with the university's mission." Donato said that the officers chose him to be the club's new adviser not only

because he can act as a liaison between the administration and the students but also for his ability to "vocalize and facilitate the mission of the university."

"The fact that I am a Holy Cross priest and the associate vice president for student life is a good way to make sure that this group stays focused for what we hope all student groups are involved in, but also this particular one which deals with the sacred area of human sexuality," Donato said.

As the GSP constitution is currently written, the officers retain the right to name the club's advisers. Silliman said the GSP doesn't intend to alter the constitution, but that the club may have more control over its future advisers if the officers decide to grant it.

Silliman hopes that the new advisers, a priest and a campus ministry official, won't cause concern among students.

"I personally have a lot of confidence in Stacey and Fr. John's ability to welcome students and to respond in a very open manner that will make everyone feel comfortable," Sillimansaid. "It's something that I know will concern some students, but the GSP is a student-led group. They are our advisers, this isn't a classroom, and they're there to make sure the club always works here."

Other club members agree that the adviser switch is a positive development — evidence of the administration's desire to address a student need.

"I hope gay students ... stay involved ... rather than feeling marginalized."

-Valerie Silliman, GSP

community here, starting in our dorms and in our classrooms and just in our everyday life," she said. "Now, if there was a time and situation when networking would support one of our primary purposes, we might look into that."

The administrators suggested three more changes, including that the club narrow its focus to undergraduate students' needs specifically, as is the policy for all clubs. Graduate students do not pay student government fees according to Heather Lee, assistant director of student activities, so they cannot act as officers or voting members of any club.

The officers also suggested that the group strengthen the wording of its mission to ensure that "the group will provide balanced programming and education and will offer a clear, faithful presentation of the Catholic Church's teaching about human sexuality and sexual orientation," according to the memo.

As of press time, the GSP has been allotted \$174 of its requested \$2,335 budget. Because the GSP was not an official club at the time it requested funds, ASUP only allowed it a small portion in case the club was denied by the administration.

"They submitted their proposal in time for standard club recognition, but the different groups weren't able to recognize it before the budget cycle ended," ASUP president David Gregg said, adding that the GSP will be eligible for carry-over funds.

Some students think the newly-recognized club is a positive change on campus.

"The school has been really affirming," "It seems like the sort of thing that has been needed for a very long time and I'm



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that the switch is a positive development — evidence of the administration's desire to address a student need.

"The school has been really affirming," junior Jayme Schroeder, GSP vice president, said. "Some people get caught up in the fact that they choose our advisers, but it's really a minor point. It's not like they're trying to control us or anything."

The officers also recommended that the GSP stay localized to the UP community and not network with other schools and similar clubs in the area. Club members expressed agreement with this recommendation mainly because the GSP's initial purpose is to build a community of students at UP.

"They just want to keep it on the campus for a little while so we have a community on campus versus having a community fueled by outside sources," Schroeder said.

Silliman said that the networking part of the constitution felt a little "tacked-on" considering the club's primary mission.

"Everything else in our purpose and in our mission is involved with building the

marginalized."

-Valerie Silliman, GSP

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Some students think the newly-recognized club is a positive change on campus.

"It seems like the sort of thing that has been needed for a very long time and I'm excited that it went through," Julie Franks, a senior English major, said. Franks plans on joining the club.

"I think it opens up new doors that were once closed on this campus due to a lack of diversity," sophomore Brandon Pratt, said.

Silliman hopes that throughout the years the GSP will be a vibrant, welcoming community.

"My big dream is that it will last for 25 years until we don't even need gay straight alliances because our community would already be welcoming," Silliman said. "I hope it will encourage gay students to come to our university. I hope that gay students who are here will stay involved on campus rather than being marginalized and feeling alone. I hope that lots of straight people will be involved, and I hope people find answers and find questions."

THE BEACON SAFETY REPORT

Jan. 14, 9:22 a.m. - Public Safety responded to a medical call to a house in . A student burned themselves with water. The student was treated on scene.